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DISTURBING THE CHURCH

Dean George Hodges, Dr. Paul Moore Strayer, and Professor Henry C. Vedder have recently written a book each with the avowed purpose of awakening the church to her social duty. The first writer attempts this task under the title *Faith and Social Service*,¹ which serves as a general caption for eight lectures delivered before the Lowell Institute. The subjects treated are: "New Forces," "Indifference," "Doubt," "Poverty," "Labor," "Moral Reform," "The City," and "The Divided Church."

The new forces which have determined our present problem are found to be powder, printing, steam, electricity, and the evolutionary view of the world. Indifference is presented as the besetting sin of a practical, money-bent age which needs the inspiration of the Christian message. Doubt is analyzed and the solvent found "in the word of Jesus Christ." Through a consideration of the inability of charity to abolish poverty the author passes to a treatment of the labor problem.

Here, although beautifully draped in a charming style, one gets a hint of the complacency with which the faithful regard the labor movement and how confident they are that the gospel "will make people more considerate one of another" and so solve the labor problem. Needless to say, the solution hangs not so much on compassion as on an increase of justice. Similarly, granting the importance of that inner moral reform which the gospel achieves in the individual, the conviction remains that the need of such reform would be mercifully lessened were the gospel of Jesus earnestly applied to the present social injustice which breeds moral failure.

The principle which the author applies in his consideration of the city is rather more advanced and adequate than the theory expounded in the preceding sections of his book. Here he shows the necessity of religious people entering into the democratic method of reform and improvement and of laying hold of those conditions which circumscribe the possibilities of every actual and prospective citizen. Finally attention is given to the problem of the divided church with closing emphasis upon co-operation to save the souls of neglected people; and it is this interpretation of the church's purpose which is, perhaps, least understood and most resented by the unchurched. The soul, being considered as an entity apart from the living conditions in which it is achieved,

¹ *Faith and Social Service*. By George Hodges. New York: Macmillan, 1915. 270 pages. \$1.25.

does not interest the masses. They demand more heroic proof that the church has a passion for righteousness and cares for people.

The second book, by Dr. Strayer, while entitled *The Reconstruction of the Church*,¹ nevertheless presents a vast amount of incisive criticism and is representative of the social attitude of such writers as Ross and Rauschenbusch. Soundly based as it is and frankly critical, it sets forth at the same time a great worth of practical suggestion for the use of the modernized church.

To some small matters one may take exception, as for example the assumption of "an ineradicable religious instinct." However the instincts of man may integrate into religious attitudes and activities it is to be doubted whether psychology ever finds a religious instinct as such. But laying aside this caveat on terminology, the book moves straight on in a forthright consideration of facts and without any obvious bias of special pleading. Naturally the final theme here is also church co-operation. It would be difficult to find a more useful volume for young ministers and for those in preparation.

The third book² is of the out-and-out sort. The author comes to grips with the church and goes straight to the concrete problems of modern life. Social justice, the woman problem, the rights of childhood, the slum, vice, crime, disease, poverty, and lawlessness are taken up in order and with the vehemence and passion of the thoroughgoing socialist. If the following is his estimate of modern *Christianity* what epithets could be found to describe the *church*? "That bastard, cringing, sycophantic thing that our age calls Christianity is nothing else than the organized worship of Mammon."

The situation is made rather more hopeless by the author in that he has evidently as low an estimate of the working man as of the respectables in the church. "So long as they get fodder and a stall they manifest a bovine content with their life. Add thereto a mate, and it is a difficult thing to awaken their intelligence and rouse them to make an effort to better themselves. Deprive them of fodder and stall, and they seem unable to do more than bellow and paw the ground."

The reviewer, having spent some years in observing how mammon crushes life and morality out of children in a great city is able to share somewhat the author's estimate of the present industrial system, but is

¹ *The Reconstruction of the Church*. By Paul Moore Strayer. New York: Macmillan, 1915. 303 pages. \$1.50.

² *The Gospel of Jesus and the Problems of Democracy*. By Henry C. Vedder. New York: Macmillan, 1914. 395 pages. \$1.50.

hardly prepared for the paralysis which must follow despair as to the reserves of moral power resident in the great labor population. The policy of concerted political action on the part of labor, which the author advocates, demands a faith which the avalanche of woe and injustice seems temporarily to have swept away or buried.

Not to make light of this candid and brave attack upon established institutions and property rights we feel that books written under the juniper tree often need to be revised by that still small voice which reveals unmeasured and unexhausted reserves making for righteousness. One thing, however, is evident: ordinary Christian faith produces today no such earnestness as does the socialism of this book. When a man believes a thing in this way what can he do but "cry aloud"?

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RITUAL AND BELIEF

Modern functional psychology has had much to do with the trend of our present-day religious thought toward a fuller recognition of the value of ceremonial observances in the practice of religion, and we are indebted to the anthropologists for gathering from peoples in all parts of the earth, and of various grades of social culture and intellectual development, the *proofs* of the evolution of religion and of the essential rôle which ritual has played in its history.

The three books before us,¹ though widely different in size, scope, and method of treatment, have as their common purpose the setting forth of some phase of this development.

The work of Rev. D. C. Owen is the most general in its treatment, and contributes the least in the way of originality, or first-hand knowledge, purporting to be nothing more than a summarized statement of other men's investigations. Hardly has one entered on the perusal of this brief treatise, however, before the question of the *interpretation* of the facts set forth forces itself on one's consideration. Primitive man is said to recognize in nature a force superior to his own and to know "that it

¹ *Ritual and Relief: Studies in the History of Religion.* By Edwin Sidney Hartland. New York: Scribner, 1914. xiv+352 pages. \$3.00.

The Infancy of Religion. By D. C. Owen. London: Milford, 1914. vi+143 pages. 3s. 6d.

Die volkstümlichen Feste des Jahres. By Martin P. Nilsson. (Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher für die deutsche christliche Gegenwart. III. Reihe, 17.-18. Heft.) Tübingen: Mohr, 1914. 76 pages. M. 1.30.